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Message Text

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21
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8470
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PN
SUBJECT: YELLOW JOURNALISM: "CRITICA" ON STUDENT ARRESTS IN
CANAL ZONE

REF: PANAMA 4939

1. JULY 14 TABLOID "CRITICA" PLASTERED ITS FRONT PAGE WITH FALSE AND PROVATORY HEADLINES AND ARTICLES ALLEGING THAT CANAL ZONE HAD COMMITTED "ANOTHER OUTRAGE" AGAINST PANAMA, THIS TIME AGAINST PANAMANIAN STUDENTS AND JOURNALISTS.

STORY ALLEGED THAT TWO UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED THEN TRIED AND FINED IN THE BALBOA MAGISTRATE'S COURT FOR THE CRIME OF "BEING IN AN AREA WHERE ZONE AUTHORITIES PROHIBIT THE PRESENCE OF PANAMANIANS".

2. PAPERS ALLEGATION, UNTWISTED, READS TRESPASSING, AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT THE TWO WERE CHARGED WITH PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III OF THE 1936 TREATY. BOTH APPEARED BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE'S COURT ON AFTERNOON OF JULY 13, PLEADED GUILTY AS CHARGED, WERE FINED $15 AND RELEASED.

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3. ALLEGED MALTREATMENT OF JOURNALISTS CONSISTED OF CONFISCATION

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OF FILM TAKEN OF THE COURT IN SESSION, WHICH IS ILLEGAL.

4. "CRITICA" APPLAUDED THE NUMEROUS MEMBERS OF RADICAL STUDENT GROUPS WHO GATHERED AT THE COURT TO PROTEST THE TRIAL. IN TRUTH A TOTAL OF 5 SHOWED UP.

5. EMBASSY PROTESTED THE PAPER'S IRRESPONSIBILITY (COMPOUNDED THE NEXT DAY IN ITS EDITORIAL IN A NOTE DELIVERED TO CARLOS GARAY AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. GARAY, WHOSE PARSING OF ARTICLE III IS NON-PAREIL, JUST SHOOK HIS HEAD IN DISGUST.

6. COMMENT. THIS COMPLETE MISREPRESENTATION OF FACT WOULD QUALIFY AS ONE OF "CRITICA'S" WORST HAD IT NOT BEEN FOLLOWED THE NEXT DAY BY AN EVEN MORE OFFENSIVE AND INACCURATE ARTICLE. (SEE REFTEL) THE WHOLE INCIDENT WAS DELIBERATELY TRUMPED UP TO PROVOKE PUBLIC REACTION AGAINST THE CANAL ZONE, SO FAR WITHOUT SUCCESS. BEST COMMENT ON THE AFFAIR IS THAT NO OTHER NEWSPAPER HAS TOUCHED THE STORY AT ALL.
JORDEN

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